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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0919
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
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AMEMBASSY LIMA
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SUBJECT: WHATEVER IT TAKES TO WIN: A VENEZUELAN CAMPAIGN NOTEBOOK,
ISSUE 6 (MAY 11-25)

CLASSIFIED BY REASON:
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WELCOME TO OUR CAMPAIGN NOTEBOOK

1. (U) THIS IS THE SIXTH IN A BIWEEKLY SERIES OF REPORTS ON

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON

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CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(D)

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VENEZUELA'S 1998 ELECTIONS. DIVIDED INTO THREE SECTIONS--CAMPAIGN NEWS TICKER, VIGNETTES, AND HIGH-FLYERS AND BOTTOM-FEEDERS--WE HOPE TO USE THIS NOTEBOOK TO BRING YOU BREAKING NEWS, RUMORS AND INSIDER GOSSIP, AND PROFILES OF THE MANY POLITICAL HANDLERS, CAMPAIGN WORKERS, AND POLITICIANS WHO WILL MAKE THIS ELECTION HAPPEN. THIS NOTEBOOK IS DESIGNED TO COMPLEMENT OUR REGULAR POLITICAL REPORTING ON THE ELECTIONS, PROVIDING YOU A GLIMPSE OF THE "OFF CAMERA" POLITICS WHICH WILL NOT APPEAR ELSEWHERE.

CAMPAIGN NEWS TICKER

-- (U) IRENE'S MAY 9 "COMING OUT" EVENT AT THE POLIEDRO IN CARACAS ATTRACTED THE ATTENTION OF THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COUNCIL'S (CNE) RULES COMMITTEE. THE COMMITTEE CONDUCTED AN INVESTIGATION TO DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT IRENE'S RALLY, AT WHICH THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE ANNOUNCED HER PROGRAM OF GOVERNMENT, VIOLATED ELECTORAL LAWS WHICH PROHIBIT PUBLIC CAMPAIGNING BEFORE AUGUST 1. RAFAEL GARCIA BORGES, CNE SECOND VICE PRESIDENT, SAID THE INVESTIGATION

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WAS DRIVEN NOT JUST BY IRENE'S RECENT RALLY--WHICH OCCURRED JUST BEFORE THE COPEI CONVENTION WHICH ACCLAIMED HER AS THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN CANDIDATE--BUT ALSO BY THE ACTIVITIES OF OTHER CANDIDATES.

-- (U) IRENE'S CAMPAIGN MANAGERS WASTED NO TIME IN LETTING THE CNE KNOW THAT THE MAY 9 POLITICAL RALLY WAS PART OF AN "INTERNAL CAMPAIGN" (WHICH IS PERMITTED BY LAW) TO ACCLAIM IRENE'S CANDIDACY AND TO PREPARE FOR THE COPEI CONVENTION. DURING A MAY 12 MEETING AT CNE, IRENE SUPPORTER AND FORMER CNE MEMBER EZEQUIEL ZAMORA DESCRIBED IRENE'S MAY 9 RALLY AS "A NATIONAL ENCOUNTER OF THE IRENE PARTY." ZAMORA NOTED THAT THIS "ENCOUNTER FELL WITHIN THE MAY 6-JULY 25 PERIOD ALLOTTED BY LAW FOR INTERNAL PARTY CAMPAIGNS. HE COMPLAINED ABOUT THE SPEED AND PUBLICITY WITH WHICH THE CNE TOOK UP THE ISSUE OF IRENE'S RALLY, AND URGED THE CNE TO ACT "WITH THE SAME QUICKNESS IN REGARD TO POSSIBLE VIOLATIONS BY OTHER CANDIDATES."

-- (U) GENERAL OSWALDO SUJU RAFFO TURNED OVER TO THE CNE MAY 12 THE DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO REGISTER THE SOVEREIGN FRONT PARTY (FRENTE SOBERANO). SUJU, THE SECOND RETIRED FLAG OFFICER TO THROW HIS HAT INTO THE RING (AFTER FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER ADMIRAL RADAMES MUÑOZ LEON), WILL FOCUS HIS CAMPAIGN ON BORDER SECURITY ALONG THE VENEZUELAN-COLOMBIAN FRONTIER. SUJU, WORRIED ABOUT VIOLATIONS OF VENEZUELAN SOVEREIGNTY BY COLOMBIAN GUERRILLAS AND OTHER OUTLAWS, SAID, "VENEZUELA SHOULD NOT TAKE AGGRESSIVE

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POSITIONS WITH ANY COUNTRY; WHAT WE WANT IS JUSTICE AND RESPECT FOR NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY, AND THAT COLOMBIA RESPECTS ITS INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS."

-- (U) HENRIQUE SALAS ROMER, REACTING TO PUBLISHED REPORTS IN VENEZUELAN NEWSPAPERS THAT INDICATE MANY NEW YORK-BASED FINANCIAL

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HOUSES ARE WORRIED ABOUT HUGO CHAVEZ'S ASCENSION IN THE POLLS, COMPLAINED, "A FEW FINANCIAL HOUSES HAVE ABUSED THEIR PRIVILEGED POSITION AND HEIGHTENED WORRIES ABOUT VENEZUELA, CAUSING MONEY TO RUN OUT OF THE COUNTRY." DURING A MAY 19 PRESS CONFERENCE, HE NOTED THAT VENEZUELA IS STILL SIX MONTHS FROM THE ELECTIONS, AND DESCRIBED THE ALARM RAISED AS "PREMATURE." SALAS ROMER ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE IS THE FAVORITE CANDIDATE OF SOME OF THE FINANCIAL HOUSES, BUT HE WAS QUICK TO SAY, "I AM NOT MERRIL LYNCH'S CANDIDATE. I WANT TO BE VENEZUELA'S CANDIDATE."

-- (U) SALAS ROMER'S PARTY, VENEZUELAN PROJECT (PROYECTO VENEZUELA), WHICH SOUNDS MORE LIKE A FUSION JAZZ BAND THAN A POLITICAL PARTY, WAS REGISTERED AS A NATIONAL PARTY MAY 21. DOUGLAS DAGER, FORMER COPEYANO DEPUTY AND CURRENTLY SALAS ROMER'S MAN IN THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, ANNOUNCED THAT THE VENEZUELAN PROJECT HAS BEEN APPROVED IN 19 VENEZUELAN STATES AND NOW QUALIFIES TO BE REGISTERED AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL.

-- (U) OSWALDO ALVAREZ PAZ, COPEI'S 1993 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, GOVERNOR OF ZULIA DURING THE 1992 COUP, AND NEWSPAPER COLUMNIST, WAS THE FIRST VICTIM OF IRENE'S ALLIANCE WITH COPEI. ALVAREZ PAZ HAD ASPIRED TO BE ELECTED AGAIN GOVERNOR OF ZULIA, AND DECLARED HIS PRE-CANDIDACY FOR COPEI'S NOMINATION FOR THAT POSITION. HOWEVER, ARIAS CARDENAS' PROCLAIMED SUPPORT FOR IRENE, HIS TIES TO THE

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RADICAL CAUSE PARTY, AND HIS STRONG ELECTORAL BASE IN ZULIA HAVE FORCED COPEI TO GIVE ALVAREZ PAZ THE COLD SHOULDER. ALTHOUGH COPEI HAS YET TO DECLARE ITS SUPPORT FOR ARIAS CARDENAS, IT HAS REFUSED TO ENDORSE ALVAREZ PAZ'S CANDIDACY. ALVAREZ PAZ, FRUSTRATED BY THE DELAY, PULLED HIMSELF OUT OF THE RUNNING FOR THE NOMINATION ON MAY 21.

-- (U) EXECUTIVE EXPERIENCE IS PERCEIVED AS THE NEW ROUTE TO THE TOP IN VENEZUELAN POLITICS. POLITICIANS ARE SCRAMBLING TO WIN THE COUNTRY'S FEW HIGH PROFILE EXECUTIVE POLITICAL JOBS. IN CHACAO, THE MAYORSHIP WHICH IRENE SAEZ IS LEAVING BEHIND HAS 14 PRETENDERS. AMONG THOSE ARE NELSON CHITTY LA ROCHE, COPEI'S CONGRESSIONAL FLOOR WHIP, AND OSCAR ARNAL, A YOUNG COPEI NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER. BOTH RECOGNIZE THAT THE NATIONAL CONGRESS NO LONGER PROVIDES A LAUNCHING PAD FOR HIGHER POLITICAL AMBITION. ARNAL STARTED HIS CAMPAIGN EARLY, IS WORKING HARD, AND AT THE MOMENT HAS A VERY NARROW LEAD IN THE POLLS. HIS BASIC CAMPAIGN THEME IS, "I'LL KEEP DOING WHAT IRENE HAS BEEN DOING."

-- (U) HUGO CHAVEZ RECENTLY CALLED ROMULO BETANCOURT, THE FATHER

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OF MODERN VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY, "THE ONLY COUPSTER IN OUR COUNTRY'S HISTORY." CHAVEZ WAS TRYING TO DEFLECT ATTENTION FROM HIS OWN COUP ATTEMPT, WHICH HE CONTINUES TO VIEW AS A LEGITIMATE EXERCISE OF HIS RIGHT AS A CITIZEN TO REPLACE ANY GOVERNMENT HE DOES NOT LIKE.

RESPONSE TO CHAVEZ'S STATEMENT WAS QUICK. ALBERTO CORONIL HARTMANN, A COLUMNIST AND THE SON OF BETANCOURT'S SECOND WIFE, CALLED CHAVEZ'S REMARKS "A BRUTALITY" WHICH WILL ONLY HARM CHAVEZ'S RELATIONS WITH EX-ADECO SYMPATHIZERS, MANY OF WHOM STILL REVERE

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BETANCOURT. HARTMANN NOTED THAT THE 1945 UPRISING, LED BY BETANCOURT, WAS NOT A COUP ATTEMPT, BUT A RESPONSE BY THE DEMOCRATIC ACTION PARTY TO THEN-PRESIDENT MEDINA'S EFFORTS TO STOP DIRECT ELECTIONS WHICH AD WOULD HAVE WON. HARTMANN ALSO CRITICIZED CHAVEZ FOR MEETING WITH FORMER DICTATOR MARCOS PEREZ JIMENEZ DURING A RECENT VISIT TO SPAIN. HARTMANN CHARACTERIZED PEREZ JIMENEZ AS "A CONFESSED AND CONVICTED THIEF." REFERRING TO CHAVEZ'S TENDENCY TO PANDER TO ANY CROWD HE IS TALKING TO, HARTMANN CALLED CHAVEZ A "SCHIZOPHRENIC AND DEMAGOGUE WITHOUT CONTENT."

VIGNETTES

CANDIDATES ON THE COUCH

2. (U) THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTIONS WILL BE DETERMINED BY THE "ETHICAL IMAGE" PROJECTED BY THE DIFFERENT CANDIDATES, ACCORDING TO NOTED PSYCHIATRIST ROBERTO DE VRIES. THE ARGENTINE-BORN PSYCHOANALYST IS WELL-KNOWN IN VENEZUELA, HAVING MADE A NAME FOR HIMSELF BY STUDYING THE SOCIAL ORIGINS OF VIOLENCE IN VENEZUELAN SOCIETY AND WHAT HE CALLS THE "PSYCHOSIS OF INSECURITY" PRODUCED BY ECONOMIC RECESSION AND THE GROWTH OF URBAN CRIME.

3. (U) DE VRIES IS IN THE PROCESS OF CREATING PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILES OF THE DIFFERENT CANDIDATES, THE RESULTS OF WHICH HE IS ALWAYS KEEN TO SHARE WITH THE PRESS. SPEAKING RECENTLY AT A MAY 15 CONFERENCE ON POLLING AND POLITICAL IMAGE, SPONSORED BY THE POLITICAL-ELECTORAL COMMUNICATION CONSULTANCY OF VENEZUELA, DE VRIES SAID, "IT IS DIFFICULT NOWADAYS FOR A CORRUPT POLITICIAN TO

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OVERCOME HIS PERSONAL CONTRADICTIONS AND TO KEEP ON FOOLING THE

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PEOPLE. TODAY PEOPLE ARE TRAINED TO KNOW WHO IS TRICKING THEM AND WHO IS NOT." LOOKING AT THE CURRENT FIELD OF CANDIDATES, DE VRIES MADE THESE COMMENTS:

-- LUIS ALFARO. HE REPRESENTS THE PAST, WHICH IS VERY GOOD FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO GO BACKWARD AND BEGIN ALL OVER AGAIN, BUT THIS IS NOT WHAT THE COUNTRY NEEDS. ALTHOUGH I AM NOT SAYING THIS IS A BAD THING, HIS IMAGE IS THAT OF TAKING SEVERAL STEPS BACKWARD IN ORDER TO SEE BETTER THE FUTURE.

-- HUGO CHAVEZ. HE REPRESENTS A SERIES OF REVOLUTIONARY CHANGES THAT ATTEMPT TO IMPROVE THE REALITY OF 85 PERCENT OF VENEZUELANS, BUT WHICH MEANS A RUPTURE WITH A SYSTEM WHICH USED TO BE DEMOCRATIC BUT NOW IS CONTROLLED BY PARTIES. NEVERTHELESS, CHAVEZ HAS CONTRADICTIONS THAT HE NEEDS TO WORK OUT, SUCH AS WANTING TO MAKE A REVOLUTION DESIGNED TO BREAK UP THE SYSTEM BUT EXCLUDING THE PEOPLE FROM THIS REVOLUTION. HE NEEDS TO FIX THIS.

-- CLAUDIO FERMIN. HE IS THE ONE WHO DARED TO BREAK WITH THE PARTY STRUCTURE AND CREATE A NEW FORM OF LEADERSHIP, BUT HIS MESSAGE IS ONE OF EMOTION AND REBELLION AND STILL DOES NOT HAVE THE STRUCTURE TO GIVE HIS POSITIONS THE SUBSTANCE NECESSARY TO REFLECT HIS DIFFERENCES WITH THE OTHER CANDIDATES.

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-- IRENE SAEZ. SHE STARTED AS THE "LIGHT" POLITICAL OPTION FOR A PARALYZED CIVIL SOCIETY WHICH WANTED CHANGE WITHOUT VIOLENCE. HOWEVER, SHE COMMITTED THE ERROR OF CHANGING HER IMAGE OF SERENITY IN A CONFLICTIVE COUNTRY--WHERE SHE DID NOT HAVE MUCH TO SAY BECAUSE THE IMPORTANT THING WAS JUST BEING THERE--FOR A MORE AGGRESSIVE STYLE OF SPEAKING, SIMILAR TO THAT OF ANDRES VELASQUEZ. THIS CHANGE, FROM SERENITY TO SOLIDARITY WITH TRADITIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES, HAS CAUSED A SHOCK WHICH HAS CAUSED HER IMAGE TO COME UNDONE.

-- HENRIQUE SALAS ROMER. HE REPRESENTS THE MID-POINT BETWEEN TRADITIONAL PARTIES AND CHAVEZ. HE KNOWS HOW TO BE A MEDIATING FACTOR, A TRANQUIL REVOLUTIONARY WHO BASES HIS POWER ON THE EFFICACY OF HIS ORGANIZATION. HE CAN COMFORTABLY MANAGE UP TO 25 DIFFERENT IMAGES, MOVING FROM THE SOLITARY POLITICIAN TO THE ELEGANT COAT OF THE GREAT MANAGER AND BUSINESSMAN.

HUGO'S BUSINESS CARDS

4. (U) HUGO CHAVEZ IS PASSING OUT BUSINESS CARDS FEATURING THE SEAL OF THE STATE OF VENEZUELA. ACCORDING TO THE NATIONAL LAW OF SYMBOLS (NO JOKE, THERE REALLY IS SUCH A LAW), THIS TYPE OF CARD CAN ONLY BE USED BY THE PRESIDENT, MINISTERS, CONGRESSMEN, MEMBERS OF THE SUPREME COURT, AND OTHER HIGH FUNCTIONARIES. FURTHERMORE, PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES ARE PROHIBITED FROM USING THE SEAL OF VENEZUELA ON CAMPAIGN LITERATE OR OTHER KINDS OF PROPAGANDA

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(INCLUDING, WE PRESUME, BUSINESS CARDS). HUGO'S NEW BUSINESS CARD MIGHT BE CONSIDERED PRETENTIOUS AND PREMATURE, BUT IT IS A STEP FORWARD IN ONE SENSE: THE CURRENT CARD ONLY FEATURES HIS NAME. HIS OLD BUSINESS CARD ALSO INCLUDED THE TITLE, "LIEUTENANT COLONEL, RETIRED."

5. (U) FOR THOSE WHO WANT TO PURSUE THIS ISSUE FURTHER, FINES ESTABLISHED BY THE LAW OF SYMBOLS FOR MISUSE OF THE STATE SEAL VARY FROM 100 TO 1,000 BOLIVARES (20 U.S. CENTS TO USD 2.00). IN THE INTEREST OF FULL DISCLOSURE--AND TO PROVE WE DID NOT MAKE THIS UP--WE PROVIDE OUR READERS WITH HUGO'S PHONE NUMBERS:

TELEPHONE: 793-0031
793-9179
793-0670
CELLULAR: 014-937-7543
FAX: 961-2430

ROCK THE VOTE

6. (U) THE VENEZUELAN ROCK AND ROLL GROUP "DISORDEN PUBLICO" (PUBLIC DISORDER) HAS JUST RELEASED ITS NEWEST COMPACT DISC. ENTITLED "BURSTING LEAD," ITS COVER FEATURES THE ROCKIN' IMAGES OF RAFAEL CALDERA, LUIS ALFARO, LUIS HERRERA CAMPINS, EDUARDO FERNANDEZ, TEODORO PETKOFF, PABLO MEDINA, ANDRES VELASQUEZ, AND ANTONIO LEDEZMA. THE MAGIC OF DIGITALIZED PHOTO MANIPULATION PUTS ALFARO, LEDEZMA, VELASQUEZ, AND MEDINA DANCING AND JUMPING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CD COVER, PETKOFF AND FERNANDEZ RIDING SKATEBOARDS, HERRERA CAMPINS DOING A MID-AIR SPLIT, AND CALDERA, DRESSED IN A BLACK AND GOLD POLO SHIRT AND WEARING AN ENGLISH DRIVING CAP,

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PLAYING THE SAXOPHONE. DISORDEN PUBLICO GAINED NOTORIETY IN THE LATE 80S FOR ITS SONG, "YO QUISEIERA QUE LOS POLITICOS FUERAN PARALITICOS" (I WISH ALL POLITICIANS WERE QUADRAPELEGICS). THE BAND'S EXPLANATION OF ITS COVER WAS STRAIGHTFORWARD, "THESE POLITICIANS ARE THE WORST PUBLIC DISORDER WE KNOW."

HIGH FLYERS AND BOTTOM-FEEDERS

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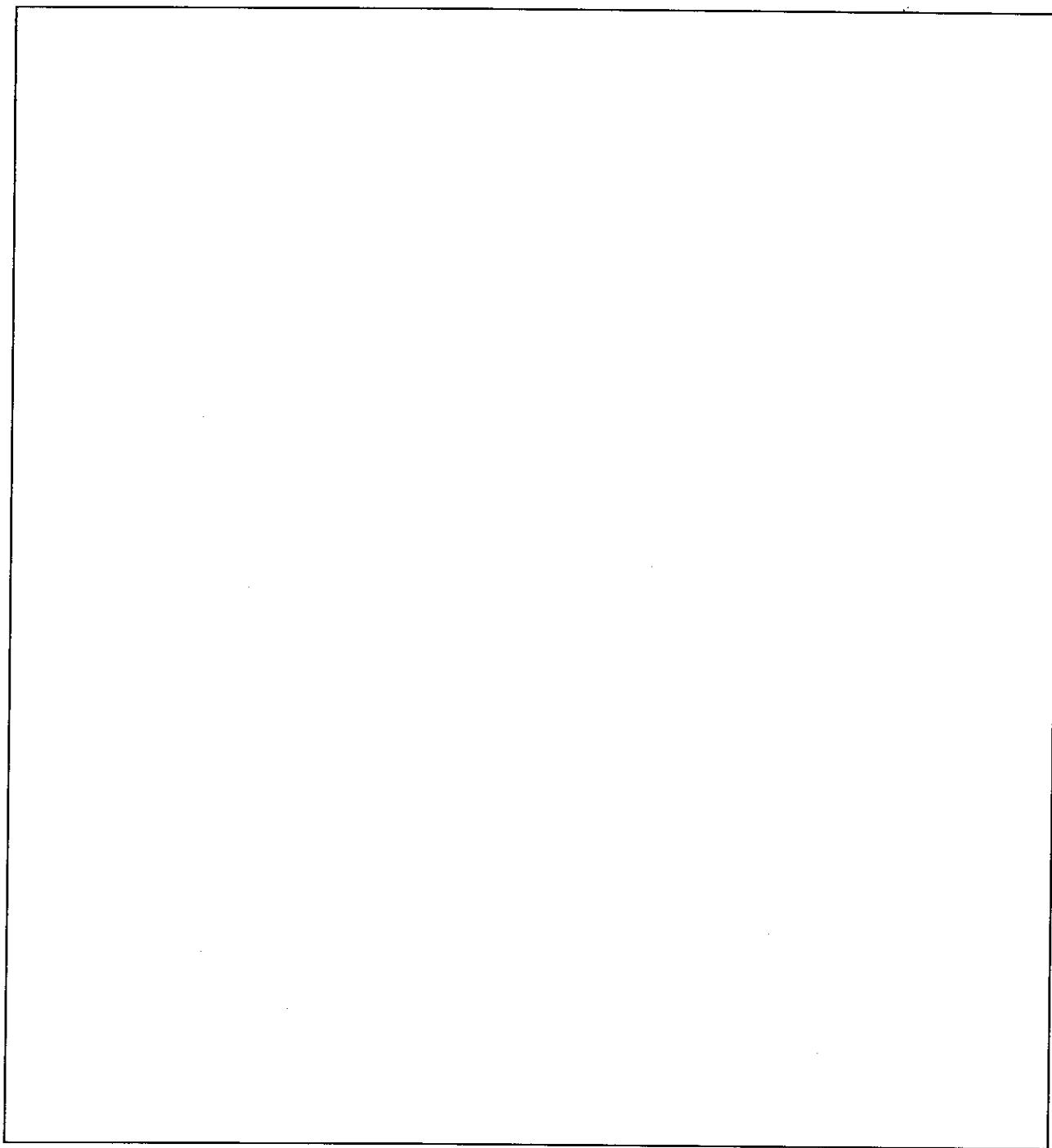
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